WORKERS HAMMER 4
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13 September

DISASTER FOR THE LEFT

The first duty of revolutionaries is to tell the truth, no matter how bitter. And the truth is that in London on 13 September, Tommy Robinson's side won hands down. His right-wing demonstration "Unite the Kingdom" gathered hundreds of thousands of people (if not a million) while the counter-demonstration organised by Stand Up to Racism barely reached 10,000. The right was emboldened, confident and ready for a showdown. The counter-demonstration was tiny, frail, wishy-washy and ended up being trapped. There is no point in sugarcoating it: this was a devastating defeat for our side, terrifying for all the oppressed in this country and a sinister warning of what is to come.

This must be a ***wake-up call for all leftists!*** Whoever will try to hide the truth and minimise this defeat is simply doing a disservice to the cause of anti-racism and socialism. One point must be clear: whatever the left has been doing for years is simply ***not working.***

And what is not working is the liberal politics of Stand Up to Racism, which have dominated the fight against the right and whose total impotence was on full display today. The whole demonstration was organised on the basis of liberal platitudes like "refugees are welcome here", "no borders", "love not hate", etc. And, correspondingly, the whole thing was a pathetic peace crawl, suitable for NGOs, Labourite feminists and peaceniks, which makes the left look hippy-dippy and unserious.

The demo barely had any stewards. As it got close to Trafalgar Square, and as right-wingers were staging one provocation after the

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How NOT to fight the right

Stand Up to Racism demonstration. Liberal anti-racism is not working.

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other, there was no organised force to protect the demo. This is because it was built like a carnival, not a fighting force. And also because Stand Up to Racism entirely relies on the police to protect its demonstrations—another liberal illusion which is, in fact, an admission of bankruptcy. No wonder minority workers stayed away.

The demonstration was also ***not*** organised as a pole of working-class struggle. Yes, the banners of every trade union in the country were there. But anyone who was there knows that it was retirees and leftists carrying them. One has to be wilfully blind to ignore the fact that most workers were on Tommy Robinson's side. This is again the result of the complete bankruptcy of liberal politics. For years, the strategy of Stand Up to Racism has been to yell "racist" and "fascist" at any worker expressing concern about immigration and the refugee crisis. Such a strategy has only pushed workers into the arms of the right.

And the cherry on the cake was the line-up of speakers: Labour MPs Diane Abbott and John McDonnell, trade union bureaucrats from the NEU, PCS, ASLEF and the TUC ***who all support the Starmer government!*** These people are ***for*** the government and ***part of the establishment!*** Is it any surprise then that most working people associate the left with the defenders of the status quo?!

Liberal platitudes and moralism, reliance on the police and an open alliance with supporters of the government. This is what is pushing millions of working people to Tommy Robinson and Nigel Farage.

Now, it is easy to throw rocks at Stand Up to Racism. They and the SWP do deserve a sharp condemnation for having led the fight against the right into the blind alley of liberal politics. But what have the other left groups been doing? How have they tried to fight this orientation? The RCP, SAlt, FRFI, the CPB, the CPGB, the SP, etc. This is a defeat for all of us. But the truth is that these groups refuse to confront the liberalism of the left—the source of today's disaster. This must ***stop***. The country has shifted to the right and the whole left is in denial about it. It is time to ***wake up!*** To have a fight about the causes of this and what to do about it. At a minimum, all left groups must ***work together*** for the next counter-protest, with the aim of forming a militant and solid bloc to stand up to the right—in the best tradition of the united front. Above all else, we need to win back the working class to our side.

On 13 September, the Spartacist League formed a modest but real pole of militancy in the demonstration. We marched under the banner "Smash racist thugs, reject Farage, break with Starmer", together with one reading "Ditch the liberals, win the workers". We chanted "Peace and love won't stop the fascists, mobilise the working masses", together with slogans against Starmer. (Unsurprisingly, some right-wing demonstrators were disarmed by our slogans against Starmer. Turns out, when you frontally oppose the government, you actually can undercut Robinson's support.)

Because the truth is that most people on Robinson's side were not fascists. You can only imagine when, in a few months, actual Nazis get organised to smash our side. We must not wait to find out. Time is running out for socialists. Either we change course or we sink with the liberals. 13 September must be a brutal wake-up call. ■